DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 109 896 FL 006 891

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TITLE Suggestions on Japanese Materials.
PUB DATE Sep 74
NOTE 3p.; Paper presented at the Conference on Material Development Needs in Uncommonly Taught Languages: Priorities for the 70's (Columbia, Maryland, Sept. 29-Oct. 2, 1974)

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.76 HC-$1.58 PLUS POSTAGE
DESCRIPTORS College Language Programs; Cultural Awareness; Educational Needs; *Instructional Materials; *Japanese; *Language Instruction; Language Learning Levels; Languages for Special Purposes; *Material Development; Reading Skills; Second Language Learning; *Uncommonly Taught Languages
IDENTIFIERS *Neglected Languages Materials Conference 1974

ABSTRACT

After commenting briefly on the current state of instructional materials available to students and teachers of Japanese at a college level, the paper underlines the need for materials that deal specifically with aspects of Japanese culture, and outlines suggestions for possible materials. Graded intermediate materials that stress particularly the development of reading comprehension skills, based on basic course materials that are currently available, would have as their goal the joining of basic materials presently used and "real-language materials," that is, newspapers, magazines and the like. Oral skills would also be stressed here. The paper then addresses the need for monolingual Japanese reading materials for advanced students in disciplines other than language: literature, linguistics, social science. The shortcomings of presently available materials of this nature are briefly reviewed. Thirdly, the need is expressed for development of monolingual grammatical introductions to and monolingual annotated text selections from earlier forms of the written language. The goal here would be to introduce the student to these materials exculsively through the medium of Japanese. The need for cooperation among Japanese scholars and American language teachers is stressed throughout. (CLK)

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Suggestions on Japanese Materials

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While no one would suggest that our present basic introductory course materials in Japanese for college-level work are perfect, I also think that no one in the field would seriously wish to propose that re-doing them at this time could be assigned any very high priority. Many of us might wish that these materials contained a somewhat higher level of Japanese cultural content -- and feel by the same token that an appreciable number of beginning students are somewhat /put off/fairly early in their study of the language by the evident lack of specifically Japanese cultural impact in even the best of these materials; but to a significant degree this widely felt lack may be remedied by the effective teacher, and the judicious employment of supplementary aids and materials; and so for the specific period in the future to which we are now giving consideration, these materials will probably have to be counted on to serve us as well in the time immediately ahead as they have in the recent past.

Having said this much about the basic materials now available, it appears to me that it is necessary to attach equally urgent /top priority/ labels to each of the following varieties of access tools, intending that the following order of introduction not be taken as indicating ordering within that /top priority/, and that each of the following be understood as meriting the same degree of urgent attention (if that is possible)". These three are as follows:

(1) graded intermediate materials, particularly stressing the development of reading skills, that will take as their part of departure the presently available basic course materials, as well as considering the problem of join-up with the programs of students entering college-level programs from the secondary programs, havig as their goal the overall task of bridging the gap between presently used basic materials and "real-language materials," probably identifying their upper cut-off point at, roughly, the degree of difficulty of a current Tokyo daily newspaper (which presents far more difficult reading-matter than might generally be supposed). To develop these materials willrequire a good deal of preliminary basic research, before the actual writing of the matrials can begin, since we have only a very hazy idea of where the "bridge" should start, and only a slightly clearer idea of where it should end. All we reallyknow is that there is in an intermediate area here, that it is not at all adequately covered by existing materials, and that they are urgently needed. Though these materials will be primarily directed at developing and enhancing reading-comprehension skills, they must be coordinated with an oral component, that will also build directly upon the earlier basic materials. All this will be no easy matter to develop, and the preliminary research (basic research in frequency of syntactic structures encountered in written materials, vocabulary counts, etc.) will be of consieerable scope -- annd costly, even with binational (i.e. Japanese) participation.

(2) Developing monolingual Japanese reading materials for advanced students in various disciplines (literature, linguistics, social science, etc.), where "real language" materials will be made available with Japanese notes, glosses, vocabularies explained in Japanese, i.e. with all necessary aids for the student -- who may very well by this time be working alone -- but entirely in Japanese, without a bilingual component. Developing these materials too will of course require binational cooperation; when complete, they should go a long way toward answering the needs of advanced students for "reading courses" in wich they will be able to familiarize themselves -- but at their own pace, generally on an

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individual basis, with the most important vocabulary, cliches, ind other technical-language of their fields of interest. A similar set of materials in early modern (Meiji) literature would be of great value; presently available Japanese editions of such texts explain what the editor thinks a Japanese reader needs to know about the text, which is hardly ever the same as what the non-Japanese, non-first-language reader, needs to know about it. The requirements of the Japanese reader are seldom those of the American college student, either in reading the text (on the simplest level), or in understanding it (on the highest). Yet in the absence of such materials, we continue to expect our students to make do with materials aimed at totally different groups with totally different needs.

The above-described monolingual Japanese-annotated reading materials would aim, in the final analysis, at the same needs that the series of annotated readings developed at Michigan in the various disciplines about a decade ago were designed to meet; but the experience of the professions with these materials have, I believe, pretty well persuaded everyone that bi-lingual annotation, glossaries, etc., at this level is not only of very limited value to the advanced student, but presents a whole matrix of problems in preparation that all but rules out effective binational cooperation -- and this precisely in the field where effective cooperation of Japanese scholars with American language teachers is essential both to identify and at the same time to solve the problems presented by materials of this level.

(3) development of monolingual grammatical introductions to and monolingual annotated text selections from earlier forms of the written language, designed to introduce the advanced student to these materials entirely through the medium of Japanese (the materials described immediately above are, in contrast, in the modern written language). Here again the cooperation of Japanese scholars with American language teachers familiar with the problems of non-Japanese students will be essential. In the absence of these specially designed materials, our students customarily try to make-do with materials aiming at Japanese high-school or university students, whose problems with the language involved are of course quite different from those of our students.

In addition to the above three general varieties of materials that appear to me to be urgently required by the Japanese language field, I would also like to direct the attention of the group to the more specific list of individual desiderata spelled out in some detail in the recommendations of the Spring, 1969 SSRC Joint Committee on Japanese Studies conference on Japanese language programs and materials, which I chaired, and which in its final report presented a considerable list of detailed requirements in the field. Work has yet to be undertaken on a single one of the projects then urged by that group, which was representative of the entire field; it remains, I think, a document of considerable value and interest despite the passage of time.